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A MASQUE OF
DEAD FLORENTINES

MAURICE HEWLETT

PR
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1895

W. MACDONALD MACKAY

A MASQUE OF DEAD FLORENTINES

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

MICHAEL ANGELO COMES CROWN'D.

A Masque of Dead Florentines,

wherein some of Death's Choicest Pieces, and the Great Game that he played therewith, are fruitfully set forth

"*Fiorenza mia, ben puoi esser contenta.*"

By Maurice Hewlett
Pictured by J. D. Batten

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TO

MY PROVED COMPANION OF FLORENTINE DAYS

AND OTHER SEASONS OF FAIR AND FOUL WEATHER—

THIS NORTHERN FRUIT

TO

MY WIFE

PREFATORY NOTE

It will sufficiently be seen that this poem does not treat of *Florentine* history; that it flouts chronology. *Nullum tempus occurrit regi.* May this maxim be twisted to further the poet? The painters adopted it when they yoked *Lucrece*, *Susanna*, and the daughters of *Danaus* to *Chastity's* chariot; and *Dante* found *Ulysses* in the same pit with *Guido da Montefeltro.* Let this serve as my excuse for setting *Giotto* after *Boccace*, and for worse discourtesies to *Time's* travels.

Here you see, as in a glass,
Death and *Florence* grip and pass.
One was scornful as a maid
In her bravery fresh array'd:
One was brawny, hearted brass——
Which look'd longer, *Death* or lass?

Gentles, you and *Death* and I
Have a friendly fall to try.
He is masterful and plays
Steadily; looks not for praise,
Heeds no blame. Your head is high,
High as mine—but by and bye?

PERSONS OF THE MASQUE.

A Chorus of tired ladies and poets forgotten.
The Florentine Shades.
A Herald.
Three Reproaches.
King Death.

THE MASQUE:

First Part.

The Scene is an open *loggia* giving upon a garden in winter, with leafless trees, and cypresses. The rain stands in pools; over all is the soughing of a great wind. A fitful sunshine comes and goes.

After the Second Sounding

The *Chorus* of twelve poets and twelve ladies, robed alike in sad-coloured habits, comes into the garden, and looking towards a terminal statue of *Memory* which is in it, says this:

I

We have lost what we had won,
Love's reward for love's work done.
Sightless *Memory* receiv'd
No news, if we joy'd or griev'd.
Were we lov'd? She lov'd us not.
Pity-worth? Behov'd us not.

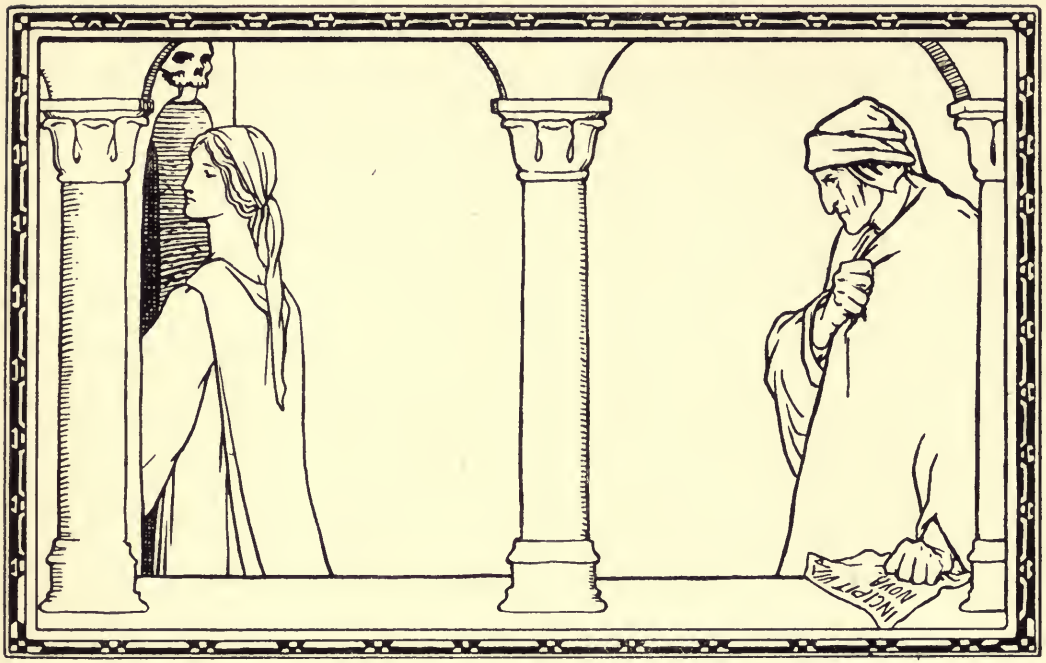
Of quiet death.

Yet we count us happier
Than are they whose keener star
Shone about them while they stayed
Here with us; and when they strayed
Forbore *Death* their names to hide:
We are they who quietly died.

II

Invocation of the great ones.

Here begins that crimson line,
Greater none, nor more divine.
By thy grimness of achieving,
By the scope of thy conceiving,
God-creative, *Heaven*-cleaving,
Alighieri! lift thy head
From among the sheeted dead.
Buonarroti! God is just;
Come thou too to close the trust:
Tell the story
How the glory
Of thy burgh was pash'd in dust.



DANTE ALIGHIERI passes, in sober red habit and cowled; a tongue of fire above his brow.

DANTE.
The first to speak in *Florence*, *Florence* spurn'd
My song and service. From home to outland turn'd,
I sensed *God's* secrets, eating salted bread.
God woke my love by death: they crown'd me, dead.

CHORUS.

O lasso!

Woe, the dead poet! Woe, the alien tomb,
And brooding brow shadow'd by all *Hell's* gloom!
How was that City proud and confident
That past him by. Alas! all's woe upon her!

Say, wouldst thou know his heart? His heart was riven:
To *God* one half, to *Beatrice* half was given.
But since *God* saw *Heav'n* bare without her soul,
He took her; and the cloven heart was whole.

BEATRICE PORTINARI passes. She is in a clear green garment, and holds her hand to her heart.

BEATRICE.

My spirit, like a sigh, just flutter'd o'er
Our homestead city; melted then to soar
As altar-smoke. But one who'd mourn'd me wed,
Follow'd me from that Feast. I liv'd, being dead.

CHORUS.

I

God saw her beautiful, and lov'd, and took her!
How dark the city sate
(That joyed of late)
When she, that youngest angel-shape, forsook her.

II

Of DANTE and BEATRICE.

This is that man who thought it well
Alone to tread the gulfs of *Hell*,
Who look'd on naked sin beneath
The mask of life, and call'd it death.

Nor lost he there his latest breath,
Nor all the pity he had shed;
But it was heap'd on him, and led
Him outward from the cavern's teeth.

And that great utterance he said
Liveth, and he who saw the dead
Cannot taste death; for *Death's* hand shook
To feel the burden of his Book.

And this is She at whose death-moan
The wasted City sat alone;
And She whose giving up of life
Forewarn'd him take her soul to wife.

III

Of Song, the miraculous child.

From the nuptial of Spirit and Spirit,
From the girdle that bound her young heart,
Unloosed by the tongue of his art,
Sprang the burning miraculous Child
All soothsay that was to inherit,
To nourish and foster and spread,
Till all kindreds should leap when he smiled,

Or panting run whither he led
At the spell of his treacherous merit.

O *Song*, with the throat of a bird
And loins and core of a youth ;
O *Song*, crystal harbour of truth,
That sprang from Love mated with Power !
O *Song*, when thy harping was blurr'd,
Thoughtest thou, O *Song*, in thy ruth,
What blood had water'd thy flower
Ere yet one tendril had stirr'd ?
What paling of virginal bosoms,
What prayerful, and tearful, and sooth
Upgiving of strength, that thy blossoms
Should bud in that clamorous hour ?

But *Song* set his delicate feet
In the way of the *World* and the mire ;
Song tasted the fruit of desire,

And laugh'd at the clouding of eyes
(For he knew love's filming was sweet).
So *Song* held revel, and loud
Sang he with passionate cries:
And his raiment was golden and proud.
Thus the cup of his wrath was complete.

IV

Song as a child was full of peace
Laid in the bosom of *Beatrice.*
O sweet lady, O griev'd heart,
How fared *Song* and his brother *Art?*

LAURA comes, a youthful Matron in a high-waisted gown, a child at either hand. She looks patiently before her, with good courage.

LAURA.

I gave my love to him who lov'd my face,
I did him wifely service with good grace;
Nor lean'd aside to what my Poet said:
But I may thank him now that I am dead.

PETRARCH.

PETRARCH. He has a laurel-wreath, and bears a little crystal urn wherein is his own heart.

My voice was as the swan's that dirgeth death;
My joys were frail things, lighter than a breath.
But, like the night, I froze them to a brede—
They wove me crowns thereof, and wrapt me dead.

CHORUS.

The CHORUS tells of his consolation.

"Merci," she laugh'd him once; a glove discarded,
A parting, and a meeting:
With these his poet's hunger was rewarded;
But in her greeting,
Or when the light of her died down and flutter'd
As stars at dawning,
Or at her coming various song-birds utter'd
The rosy birth of morning;
Or when he knelt and took her hand's warm sheathing,
His heart on fire
Shot golden words unto his lips, which breathing
Did lift him higher
Than ever long assuagement of desire.

BOCCACE passes, crowned with flowers, a wreath'd thyrsus in his hand.

BOCCACE.

Heavy the blossoms, sultry-sweet the wine,
And all the air gold-dusted with sun-shine.
I found a girl's warm bosom for my head,
And—*God* was good! I lov'd till I was dead.

FIAMMETTA passes. She is robed like a King's daughter, and carries a pair of golden shears.

FIAMMETTA.

I brought my burning wealth up from the South,
I kiss'd him with the kisses of my mouth:
The low slow laugh when Southern love is fed
Was longer mine: I cloyed him, he is dead.

Of BOCCACE'S book.

CHORUS.

Yes, thou art dead, *Boccace!*
Thy garden-plot, a hundred starry flowers,
Yet springs, is fragrant yet of soft light loves,
Love languid, love askance, love under bowers
Of myrtle trees, love eager, love that proves
How love may ache, alas!

And of the sweetness of his Lady.

And she, thy confident fair
That set her gleaming teeth
To the rind of thy fruits, laid bare
Her white throat soft as death
To warm to thy amorous breath.
She let down the pride of her hair,
A flood and tangle of gold,
And sat embower'd there
Like pale Queen *Helen* of old :
Scarlet her lips, but the white of her globed breasts is untold !

The three Ladies dance a stately solemn measure, to this versing :

The Measure.

Beatrice, the white Lady,
Lead our mystic pageantry ;

Laura, slim and carcanetted,
Shy as violets dew-wetted ;

Fiammetta, lissom, young,
Golden as the arum's tongue,

Follow in the antic round,
Eyes demurely cast to ground.

High-born, stately, queens, we pass
Treading daintily the grass.

BEATRICE.

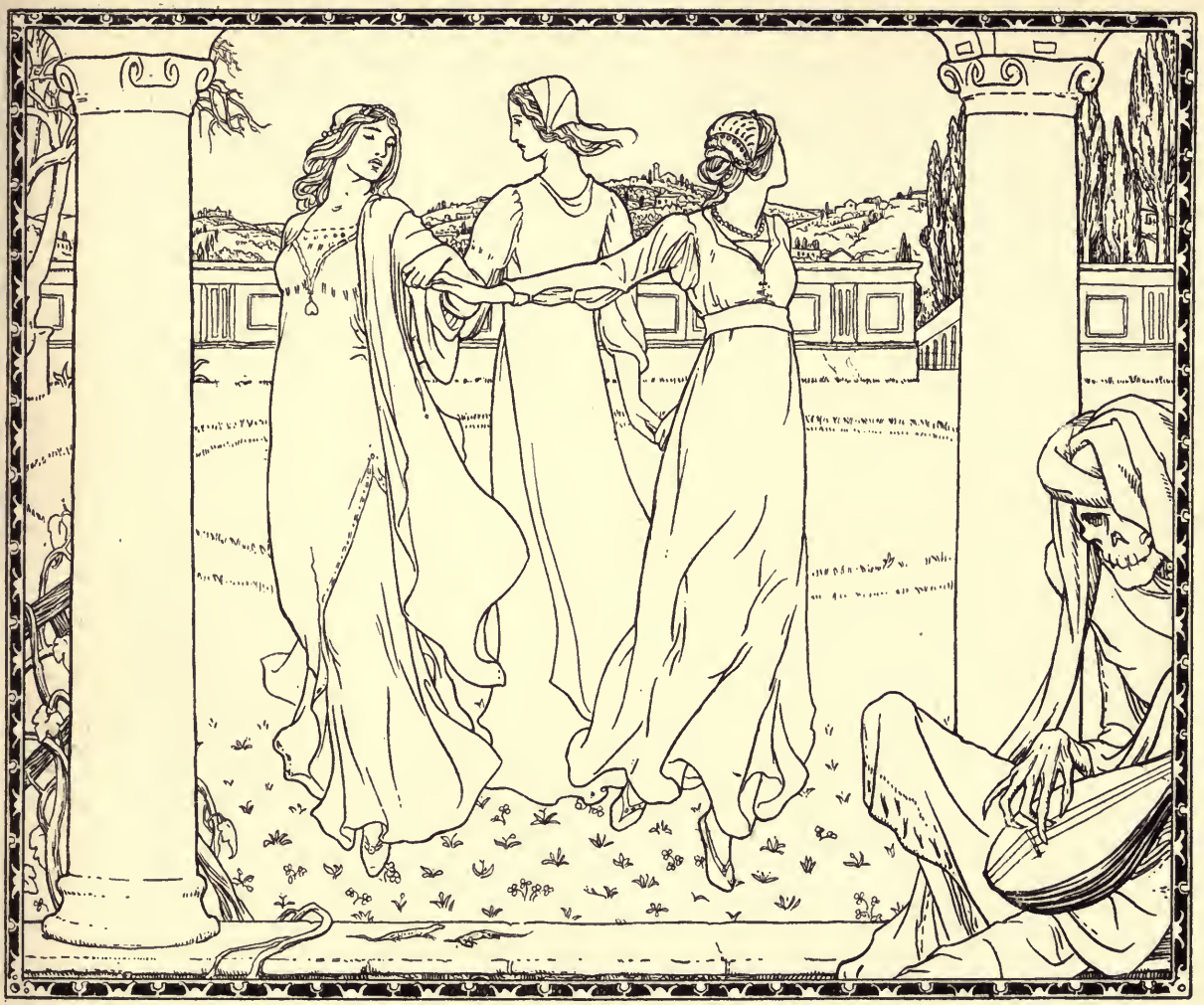
I was nine when I was wooed,
Never word my poet could.

LAURA.

Wedded wife was I, my poet
Won my looks but could not know it.

FIAMMETTA.

Great King's daughter though I were,
I chose my poet debonnair.



THE THREE LADIES.

Twine white arms, tread the measure:
Ours the grace and theirs the treasure.

Let the ghostly ladies pass
Like the mist on springing grass.

BEATRICE.

I was wedded ere my years
Number'd twelve: I shed no tears.

LAURA.

Children bore I to my lord
As thy years; I sighed no word.

FIAMMETTA.

Wedded I, but love is free:
Not my husband pleasured me.

THE THREE LADIES.

All the years and all the blisses
Come and go like children's kisses.

We are dead, and now, alas!
Shadows of us haunt the grass.

The three Ladies pass away; but the *Chorus*, looking still upon their poets, says this:

I

Of the Great Three.

Lo! now, the mighty triad of old *Florence*
Mewed like strong eagles in *Death's* pale abhorrence.
The first set patient at his prison-bars,
Look'd up and saw his lady with the stars;
The next, slow-pacing, holding him apart,
Pierc'd his own breast to *Laura* in his heart;
And last the Reveller, flushing high, did pass,
Look'd down on *Fiammetta* couch'd in grass.

O strength, that scann'd all Heaven, and Man, and
Earth !
O glory, that could give such seeing birth.

II

Of the DUOMO.

They built a shrine anon to speak those three,
Soaring aloft, dome-shadow'd like a world,
Deep-founded as the good brown Earth their fee,
And set about with massy, rich-empearl'd
Smooth marble (like the soul of Poetry),
And winding leafage of vine and olive curl'd,
Down drooping o'er the column'd tracery.
How goodly shone the vasty fabric hurl'd
Tow'rd *Heaven* up, yet cleaving sturdily
To *Earth's* broad bosom and the grey street's track,
Barr'd like a great moth's wing with rose and black,
Knew all men best when (breath'd by *God*) its flower
Spear'd up of his desire, the lily-tower.

III

Of new Shades.

Break off, break off, my heart, here are new comers,
Perpetual youth and age perpetual ;
One with the bashful bloom of early summers,
The other gnaw'd on like the years that fall.
Who is this dreamer with his dreams at call,
And happy morning face, and wholesome breath ?
Who this lean vagrant, choking down his gall
As he should grudge to void it upon *Death ?*

The first GIOTTO, figured as a young man carrying a shock of spring boughs.

GIOTTO.

The hills that call each other thro' the night,
The stars that sing of silence, the trees of light,

I knew! I knew! "Thy brethren they," He saith.
There came a sister soon, meek Sister *Death*.

CORSO.

The other is CORSO DONATI, like an old man with blood upon his hair.

I had the fire-streak'd blood no pomp could hold
Of Gothic blazon or *Cerchi's* dirty gold.
A ban-dog hounding sheep, I fought and bled
That, living, *Florence* fear'd me: I hush her, dead.

CHORUS.

One doth make what one doth mar;
One brings peace, another war.
See what *Florence'* children are—
One bit her, one did kiss the scar.

A company of four Shades comes next.

FARINATA.

FARINATA in his armour, with a naked sword;

The fire that rages in me outburns *Hell;*
I am the pride of *Florence!*

BUONDELMONTE in a white silken doublet;

BUONDELMONTE.

I rang a knell
That day they drain'd me whiter than my vest:
After 'twas *Florence* bled.

GUIDO CAVALCANTE with a lute, and a peacock's feather stuck in his cap;

GUIDO.

My way was best.
From lip to lip I past, from grove to grove:
I am like *Florence;* they call me Light o' Love.

Last PICCARDA DONATI with the Minoress' cord and sandals.

PICCARDA.

Reared in a goshawk's nest, I flew to peace;
Plighted to sin, I wedded the white *Christ:*
His arm upheld me when they marr'd our ease,
For I was stricken whiter than the mist.

In a sudden ray of light a single Shade comes to close the tale.

FRA BEATO ANGELICO, in black and white habit. He carries a lily in one hand. On his shoulder burns a star.

Fra Beato.

The mystic flame-enwrapt *Jerusalem*
Was set before me like a clouded gem.
I trod the ways of *Florence:* steep the tread,
But leading swiftly to the blessed dead.

Of lovely life. CHORUS.

Thou shalt be called the Son of Peace
And Star of *Bethlehem:*
In thee the ardent striver
Found placid requiem;
In thee, the still contriver,
In thee, the honest liver,
Dreaming thy soaring ecstasies
Within the hum of men.

Of quick recompense.

Like to the soothing of doves,
Like to the plashing of rain,
So as the cloud-shadow moves
To sober the Sun's beating pain,
Thy music, thy chrism, thy prayers,
Bade *Hope* lift again:
Hope of wings fretty with fire,
Of eyes looking out to the deep
Heart of the azure, and higher—
Yearning to creep

Into the folds of the mantle of *God*,
Haply to sleep.

The light endures for a space, and then goes out as the *Frate's* shade passes. The rain descends and veils the scene. The end of the first part.

The Second Part.

Begins under a cold clear sky. Enters the *Herald*, a young boy in a short *Greekish* cloak and *Phrygian* cap. He carries a *Pan*-pipe and speaks eagerly this sonnet.

Of new promise.

The Tale is now of *Love* and *Italy*
And *Art* their fosterling, of that new time
When first the Sun scatter'd the hoary rime
Of older fashions, and leapt eagerly
Forward and up to flood the new with glee.
Then, when the world was young and saw in rhyme
And colour move all *Nature*, the sublime
Prism and chord of *God* lay plain to see.
Then every maid held godhead, every flower
A sacrament, the fever and old dread
Of living—ecstasy! of loving—power!
So *Love* call'd from the grave the mighty dead:
And he that voiced the music of the spheres,
Plato the prophet, murmured down the years.

CHORUS.

The boy is a shade,
And the cup he quaffs
Is down to the lees:
Only *Death* laughs.

Of fulfilment.

First comes LIPPO LIPPI alone, figured as a young Satyr in a monk's frock.

LIPPO.

I peered for *God* and found him underneath
A girl's shy eyes. Up then came Master *Death*,
Saying, 'You monk, bow down to me instead;
'Here is no god for you.' My wench was dead.

Then come three scholars together.

First GIO. PICO of MIRANDOLA. He is a youth in soft raiment, reading in a Hebrew book.

PICO.

Men call'd me *Paragon*; I challenged *Rome*;
Rome frown'd, I fled: on many a dusty tome
I ponder'd, yet found not the true Godhead;
But, loving much, *God* came and laid me dead.

Then BARTOLOMMEO SCALA in his burgher's dress, and spectacles pushed on to his forehead.

SCALA.

They dubb'd me inexpert, and set me slave
At lacquey work: my heart to *Greek* I gave.
Had I that fair sort that I coveted?
I strove, I strain'd to reach, I clutch'd—'twas dead.

LIONARDO.

Then LIONARDO DA VINCI with a long white beard. He walks painfully with a crutch.

Too curious! Art short solace gave my spirit.
Too curious! Power contented not my merit.
Too curious! Life itself me wearièd.
The living tire to death: we wait, we dead.

CHORUS.

O foolish Wise!

Blind, blind, blind!
As sheep in the rain.
Blind as the *Worm* that beguiled
The Mother of *Cain.*

Then comes *La Simonetta*, as a virgin of lovely sorrowful countenance, in a white robe. Round her loins is a black snake that carries his tail ever in his mouth. She bears a chaplet of yew; and is attended by seven young maids in mourning weeds.

Grief of SIMONETTA

SIMONETTA.

Once a virgin of virgins,
Crown'd as with fire, and pale,
I stoopt to my own undoing,
I lay as corn to the flail.

THE SEVEN.

As a lily-stalk snapt by hail
She fell to her girdle's undoing,
Nor tears could avail.

SIMONETTA

SIMONETTA.

As the hawk on his wrist he was hard,
As the quail's my blithsomeness froze;
I stood asham'd in the pasture,
My eyes were wide as the roe's.

THE SEVEN.

With her lapful of flowers she uprose:
All tenderly white was her vesture,
She blush'd like a rose.

SIMONETTA.

I was woo'd in the time of wild crocus,
I sank with a trembling of knees;
He took me up on his pillion
And rode away thro' the trees.

THE SEVEN.

The willow must bend to the breeze!
She pined in her king's pavilion,
She longed for her peace.

Oh, the land swept black by the shower,
The lash and the rain!
She bow'd like a tired sweet flower,
She moan'd for her pain!

SIMONETTA.

Because, being fairer than the dawn, I trod
The flowery way that lures a soul from *God*,
And gaged my youth against man's hardihead;
Therefore I wear the bleak smile of the dead.

CHORUS.

Blind. Blind, blind, blind!
As monk in his cell;
Blind as the Corn-mother's child
That played by the mouth of Hell.

Then come the house of *Medici.* First is *Giuliano de' Medici* in hunter's green. He carries a broken shaft in his hand. Following him are seven lads (sons of princes) dressed in sables.

GIULIANO.

Once as a tiger-whelp I was athirst, *Retribution.*
And gnaw'd the breast where kindly I was nurs'd.
But thirstier the blades that cut me red,
And sent me shaggy to the secret dead.

THE SEVEN PRINCES.
Swart as the heart of the South,
Proud as the rock-springing pine,
Sweet water cool'd never thy drouth,
Nor fruit of the vine!
Last of old *Cosimo's* line,
Cut off quick in thy youth,
Thy blood was outpour'd like wine;
They show'd thee no ruth,
Who in life had none for the old, nor the roses of youth.

Then CLARICE ORSINI; a grey-hair'd woman bowed beneath a golden yoke.

CLARICE.
I had small solace for my life of anguish,
Pluck'd out from *Rome* and set in *Florence* to languish:
A pride that froze my tears ere they could shed,
And children—would they were as I am, dead!

And then LORENZO as a king crowned with thorns and holding a leaden sceptre.

LORENZO.
I am that *Medici*, swart, keen, and wanton,
That spent all *Florence* on the thin-lipt phantom

Of lust so dry it never could be fed :
At last, unshrived, still burning, I fell dead.

CHORUS.

Woe ! Woe ! the staring hearth : woe ! the tired city,
Weary of bloodshed, vacant-eyed for pity !
Woe to brown *Pisa* ! Havoc on *Volterra* !
Woe, all Woe upon us !

Three grey women hold the gate, *The RE-PROACHES.*
With sudden firelit eyes, and hate
Cradled in each beaten breast.
Stay ! Heed them ; one out-hates the rest.

Three *Reproaches*, like to bent women, appear stretching out arms towards the shade of *Lorenzo.*

The first REPROACH.

First woe was when the sword was set, *PISA.*
Sword and Fire to my own young brood.

Never a woe like the mother's cry
That watches in chains the ebb of her blood—
Woe to thee! *Pisa* was I.

The second Reproach.

The maids' dowry.

Next woe was the shaming of maids,
Stript to the smock and sold to sin.
Never such woe as to lay the lure,
Smirch and soil what once was clean—
Woe! who shall ravish the poor.

The third Reproach.

Tyranny.

Third woe was the land in chains,
Golden seeming and brave in silk.
Where is woe as for brother and brother
Bruise the bosom that gave them milk—
Woe! who traffick'd his mother.

Ere the *Chorus* can curse him, *Poliziano* comes behind him with a muffled rote, and weeping.

POLIZIANO. *Elegy.*

Grant me, gods, a fount of tears,
So that night and day
Weeping I may drown old grief,
Mourning quench the years.
So the widow'd turtle may
Give her heart relief;
So the fainting snowy swan,
So the nightingale,
All their sorrows, utter lonely passion, do bewail.

Woe for us, and woe, and woe!
Grief is bow'd and grey;
Jove hath carv'd our goodly *Tree*
With his thunderblow!
Woe the *Muses*' broken lay,
Woe the melody!
Woe, *Apollo*, woe God *Pan*,
Woe, ye Sisters Nine,

Woe, green-kirtled *Dryads*, woe, my *Bacchus*, to thy vine!
Mourning let me quench the years,
And my grief to drown,
Grant me, gods, a waterflood,
Grant a fount of tears.

CHORUS.

To LORENZO.

One there was
Who, loving much, did weep for thee. So pass:
Death may not smite
The lamp to shiver quite
That little flame within that was a Poet's light.

Next comes COSIMO, PATER PATRIÆ, an old man richly habited, having the ears of MIDAS.

COSIMO.

Laboured I well, that bound the state to mine
In gyves that chafed, but held throughout the line?
They crown'd me with a name our foes might dread,
But curs'd me for my sons when I was dead.

CHORUS.

Blind, blind, blind!
As a bird in the snow.
Blind as the king that did cherish
The son that wrought him a woe.

The little Great.

SAVONAROLA.

God set in me a heart to burn like pain,
And *Florence* fed the fire. In vain, in vain,

SAVONAROLA, carrying a smouldering torch.

I augur'd life; the fire was heap'd; I led
The way for *Florence: Florence* mock'd me dead.

Following is his enemy, FRA FRANCESCO the MINORITE, carrying a distorting glass.

FRA FRANCESCO.

For *Francis'* sake I spurn'd him of *Saint Mark:*
Is that soul sure that dareth him embark
On death's dull sea that death may serve hatred?
I know not what they won, nor care, being dead.

Next the Frate's Champion, FRA DOMENICO, cowled in white, with an anchor.

FRA DOMENICO.

I trusted in the prophet sent from *God;*
Side to his side the way to death I trod.
The flame leapt heavenward—O true he said!
Our spirits soar'd; we left but ashes dead.

SANDRO BOTTICELLI, holding a hollow sphere.

SANDRO.

Latest of all, and loneliest, I endured
In heaviness of days with light obscured:
Green earth grown grey, sun cold, the comely head
Of my life's flower snapt short—Art with her, dead!

The *Chorus* breaks in upon him with this lament, what time the rain descends and the wind blows shrill.

The dirge

What shall it profit, O Man,
That the pitiful soil of thy years,
Sterile, acheth a span
Of waste furrow'd by tears?
Waste sown with tears,
Flowering pale for a span,
Wither'd anon like the years;
What profit, O Man?

Of Loss,

Twenty thou groanest to learn,
Twenty thou thinkest to fly,
Twenty drag, and thy turn
Cometh to die.
What profit, O Man,
What the harvest of years,
Strown like corn to the fan,
Cut as with sickle the ears?

Corn that is sown with tears,
Winnow'd as chaff by the fan;
Gone the harvest of years :—
Death is profit, O Man !

And Profit.

When the Sun gleams again, you see *Luca della Robbia*, clothed in apple-green, with a bunch of yellow and blue flowers in his hand.

LUCA.

Mine was a glad small spirit unafraid;
I breathed it out, the stone walls flower'd, and made
Florence a garden. So without a dread
I laid my tools aside and blossom'd, dead.

CHORUS.

Praise of LUCA.

Thou shalt be called the Son of *Man*
And Spirit of the *Earth*,
That met young *Love* and kiss'd her
And wreath'd her lips with mirth;
April with eyes aglister,
Green *May* her buxom sister,
Shy loves and tender fruitage
Were children of thy birth.

Wherein, perhaps, the dirge is answer'd.

With eyes seeking the Sun,
And heart loving the Day,
Knowing no evil to shun,
Guileless, walking the way,

Breathing the secret of children and flowers
Into thy clay!
Man with the faith of a child,
Child with a strength superhuman;
Lover, that told of the *Virgin* most mild,
Wedded to no man:
Holy art thou, that could call her arise
God, but a woman!

NICCOLÒ MACCHIAVELLI, bearing a skull wreath'd with flowers.

MACCHIAVEL.

That kings might feast I sweated *God* away;
To insolent stripling feet I bow'd my grey

Wise brows. A smirk, a shrug, a wagging head—
I used this way: they use it on me dead.

BENVENUTO. *BEN-VENUTO CELLINI, blindfold.*
The glory of their princedoms, and their power
Who go in purple, I knew my little hour.
What time my brain-trap gript them all, I led
Whither I would. What profiteth me dead?

PULCI. *LUIGI PULCI, gnawing a stone.*
Let who wins laugh: I laugh'd at Heaven and Earth.
Dante saw *Grief* and lov'd her; I chose *Mirth*.
Mirth and I laugh'd till we were out of breath,
And left one laughing still—the jester, *Death*.

CHORUS.

The burden of FLORENCE.
A boy singing
His love and pain;
The watch-bell ringing,
Blood shed like rain!

A dreamy maid,
And a voice like a cry—
" Betrayed, betrayed!
How shall we die?"
Sigh, wind, sigh.

The squire at hawking,
The grass in flower;
Shame stalking
In the lady's bower.
"Love like a drought
Doth scorch and dry:
My heart is out,
Now let me die!"
Sigh, wind, sigh.

All the burning
Of all the *South*,

Turn'd to mourning
Thy singing mouth.
The fire kindled,
Soar'd to the sky;
The song dwindled,
The lute lay by.
Sigh, wind, sigh.

" How shall I sing
With my lady cold?
She died in the Spring;
I am grown old."
This is the load
Of the singer's cry—
" If *God* is *God*
He will let me die!"
Sigh, wind, sigh.

Then the *Chorus* invokes the last Shade.

CHORUS.

Finis coronat!

Now, last and greatest of these,
Buonarroti the Seer,
Wielder of dark mysteries,
Graver that knew no peer!
Poet, thinker in stone,
Painter, Maker of men,
Naked, silent, alone,
Gods walking again!
Thee, last, who art first,
Thee, King, we invoke;
Tell of *Florence* accurs'd,
Her dolorous stroke.

MICHAEL ANGELO comes crown'd; his robe full of weeping eyes.

MICHAEL ANGELO.

The gaunt long life of unfulfill'd desire,
The hireling's ashes on the poet's fire!
I prayed in stone. Their scorn was on their head:
In me they slew the last of their great dead.

CHORUS.

Blind, blind, blind!
As the owl in the day:
Florence was, and is not;
She passeth away!

FLORENCE was.

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